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ABSTRACT

Exploits of 20 black men, slave and free, who fought in battles of the American Revolution in New York state are recounted. At the beginning of the Revolutionary War, colonies did not allow slaves or free blacks to join the Continental Army. Only after the British Army offered freedom to slaves who joined the royal ranks did the Continental Army accept black men as soldiers. Among the 20 whose stories are told in this pamphlet were Samuel Sutphin from N.J., Timothy Prince from Vermont, and Julius Cezar from New York. Accounts are given of the black soldiers' participation in three battles; the battle for Long Island and New York City in 1776, the fight for White Plains in 1776, and the assault on Stony Point in 1779. During these campaigns, black soldiers served as militiamen, guides, teamsters, and spies. After the Revolution was over, many black soldiers experienced difficulties in obtaining the freedom they had been promised for military service. Others were not granted their pensions until 30 years or more had passed. A concluding chapter briefly describes black participation in American military activities from the French and Indian War through the Vietnam War.
(Author/AV)

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# EBONY PATRIOTS

*Participation of Blacks in the Battles of the American Revolution in the New York City Area, 1776–1779*

**A Project of**
**The Sub-Committee on Black Contributions**
**of the Historical Committee**
**of the New York City Bicentennial Corporation**

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# PREFACE

THE IDEA for EBONY PATRIOTS was conceived by the Sub-committee on Black Contributions during the early planning for New York City's celebration of the Bicentennial. It was decided that a brief historical presentation of the participation of Blacks in the Battles of the Revolution in the New York City area would be of value to students and teachers. The committee was awarded a small grant from the National American Studies Faculty to underwrite most of the basic research in the National Archives, in State Archives, and in various libraries in New York and New England. The object of the research was to identify the names and dates of service of Blacks, both slave and free, who served in battles of the Revolutionary War in New York City and surrounding areas.

It is the feeling of the Committee that this brief journey into American History proves once again that Black people have always been involved in the struggle for freedom. The sagas presented in this book reveal some of the intricacies of historical research, and give some insight into the drama associated with the American Revolution.

Although no one knows exactly how many Black Americans participated in the battles fought in and around New York City, it appears that Blacks were well-represented. The records of each of the thirteen colonies tell us about the enlistment of Black soldiers. A Hessian officer wrote in 1777 that:

> the Negro can take the field instead of his master; and, therefore, no regiment is to be seen in which there are not negroes in abundance, and among them there are able-bodied, strong and brave fellows.

But there is no exact count of how many Black soldiers fought in the War of Independence, though the figure 5,000 is often used.

A report issued by Adjutant-General Alexander Scammel entitled "Return of Negroes in the Army. 24th August, 1778" attempted an accounting of Black soldiers, but it did not include the rosters from several states nor could it account for those who enlisted after 1778.

There are many problems in putting together a list of Black soldiers who took part in these battles. Many records were destroyed in fires after the war. Poor record-keeping and haphazard recruiting practices during the war were responsible for the loss of the names and deeds of many other Black soldiers. Recruits enlisted for different lengths of service. It is also reported that some men enlisted several times and in different units. Some colonies allowed slave owners to send their slaves to fight in their place. In addition, some of the colonies promised freedom to slaves in exchange for service in the army. Other colonies, however, would not allow slaves to enlist and complained that numbers of their slaves ran away to join the Continental Army. These runaway slaves enlisted under false names to avoid being caught and returned to slavery. Ordinarily, Blacks did not serve in separate units and there was hardly ever any mention of race on the rolls of the military units. Thus there was the added problem of deciding which of the soldiers listed in the records were Black.

How, then, was it possible to identify Black soldiers? Our identification of Black soldiers began with the careful examination of the rolls of those units that took part in the battles in and around New York City for names which were commonly used by Blacks in the Colonial period. Latin names such as Cato, Caesar, Pompey, Plato, and Scipio were often taken by Blacks (or given to slaves by their masters) during the eighteenth century. Both slaves and free Black men sometimes took the name "Freeman." Also, absence of a surname might indicate the possible slave status of the enlistee.

The names of Black soldiers found by examining the military rolls were checked against the lists of applications filed with the War Department by veterans requesting pension benefits. These applications oftimes identified the applicant by race. Sometimes, the applications gave some account of the applicant's service during the war. Letters from commanding officers, fellow soldiers, or company physicians were often attached to the applications. The First Federal Census of the United States (1790), which listed the heads of households and identified each by race, was used to confirm the race of soldiers who were identified from the rolls of military units and from pension applications.

Through this process, the names of twenty Black men, slave and free, who fought in the battles of Long Island, Harlem Heights, White Plains, and Stony Point were located, and their exploits are described in this account. These twenty represent only a small handful of the Black men who served the American cause—the EBONY PATRIOTS.

## LIST OF BLACKS WHO SERVED IN REVOLUTIONARY WAR BATTLES IN THE NEW YORK CITY AREA

| *Name* | *Battle(s)* |
|---|---|
| PETER BONET | Stony Point |
| BRISTOL BUDD | Stony Point |
| HENRY CATO | White Plains |
| JULIUS CEZAR | Long Island<br>Stony Point |
| YORK CHAMPLAIN | White Plains |
| LONDON CITIZEN | Long Island |
| SAMUEL DUNBAR | White Plains |
| ARTILLO FREEMAN | White Plains |
| ENOCH FREEMAN | Harlem Heights<br>White Plains |
| PRIMUS HALL | Harlem Heights<br>White Plains |
| JAMES KEETER | Harlem Heights<br>Kingsbridge |
| JOHN FRANCIS | Kingsbridge |
| POMPEY LAMB | Stony Point |
| SALEM POOR | White Plains |
| TIMOTHY PRINCE | Harlem Heights<br>Kingsbridge<br>Long Island |
| PHILIP RODMAN | White Plains |
| PETER SALEM | Stony Point |
| CAESER SHELTON | White Plains |
| SAMUEL SUTPHIN | Long Island |
| PRIMUS TYNG | Stony Point |

# THE EBONY PATRIOTS

## Black Patriots Join the Fight for Independence

At about nine o'clock on the night of March 5, 1770, seven soldiers of King George III of England marched toward Boston Commons with bayonets fixed. Forty or fifty patriots waited, armed with only clubs and sticks, and among them was *Crispus Attucks*, a Black man. As the British soldiers drew near, the Americans began throwing sticks and rocks. Suddenly, the crack of musket fire was heard, *Crispus Attucks* fell, and the infamous "Boston Massacre" had begun.

*Crispus Attucks* was the first, but not the last Black man to put his life on the line for the patriot cause. More than twenty Black men stood alongside white colonists at Bunker Hill in June of 1775.

The war had begun in earnest by the Spring of 1775. With the battles of Lexington and Concord behind them, the American colonists and the British redcoats prepared for a major encounter on a hill just a short distance from Bunker Hill outside Charleston, Massachusetts. The air was still, the soldiers were tense. Colonial officers, keenly aware of the shortage of gunpowder, warned their troops, "Don't fire 'til you see the whites of their eyes!"

The British charged again and again, each time driven back by the undermanned and poorly-equipped colonists. During one of the charges, a colonial soldier stood and took aim at the chest of British Major John Pitcairn. Pitcairn fell mortally wounded. The colonial soldier, *Peter Salem*, was a Black man.

More than 5,000 Black men marched with the Continental Army (See Figure 1). Many, like Peter Salem, distinguished themselves in battle. Black soldiers fought in every major battle of the War of Independence. More than a few gave their lives for the American cause. Like the white colonist, some sought adventure, and some sought the soldier's pay. Many sought independence from England and the right to self-government. Unlike the white colonist, however, Black soldiers sought a more personal freedom—freedom from slavery. For, while *Peter Salem* and his fellow Black soldiers were defending Bunker Hill from British attack, hundreds of thousands of Black men, women and children remained in bondage. These Black soldiers fought not only to free themselves or to free their land, they fought to free all those who were slaves. They fought shoulder to shoulder with many who did not believe, as they did, that *all* men should be free. They marched in step with many who did not want Black men to fight with them.

In the early years of the war, the Continental Congress decided that neither slaves nor free Blacks could join the Continental Army. They were afraid that the Black soldier might seek revenge for having been enslaved and turn their weapons on the colonists instead of the British! Colonists who owned slaves were afraid that the slaves might want to be freed in exchange for fighting for their master's freedom. After all, this was a war against tyranny and oppression!

Only after the British Royal Governor of Virginia, Lord Dunmore, offered in November 1775 to free all slaves who joined the British forces did the Continental Congress allow Black men to enlist in the army.

In the meantime, thousands of Black men saw a chance to be free and joined the British army. "Even if the colonies won their freedom from England," they thought, "we will still be slaves."

At first, only free Blacks were allowed to enlist in the Continental army. Later, as the need for American soldiers grew, slaves and indentured servants in several colonies were offered their freedom in exchange for service in the American cause.

Black soldiers served the American cause in many ways. They served as militiamen, as guides, teamsters, and spies. They served in any way they could. Many joined the crews of the Continental Navy where their skills as seamen and pilots won them a great deal of praise.

Despite the bravery of men like Peter Salem, the British won the Battle of Bunker Hill. But they could not capture and hold all of New England for long, and were forced to retreat to Canada.

In Canada, British General William Howe

prepared to launch another major attack on the colonies—this time through New York. But General George Washington guessed the British plan and called for help from all the colonies to defend New York.

Many Black soldiers were in the New England regiments answering Washington's call. They came from many places. *Julius Cezar* was from New York, *London Citizen* from Rhode Island, *Timothy Prince* from Vermont, and *Samuel Sutphin* from New Jersey.

Figure 1 Illustration of An Ebony Patriot

# The Battle For Long Island and New York City

SAMUEL SUTPHIN, born a slave in New Jersey, entered the army as a substitute for his master. Sutphin's militia company was a part of the unit sent to defend New York, under the command of Colonel Lane and Colonel Frehling.

Sutphin was told that the British planned to attack Long Island first to gain control over the entrance to the Hudson River and the East River (See Figure 2). Once this was done, they planned to attack Manhattan. The fight that was brewing was very important, and tension mounted among the gathering colonial troops as they tried to guess exactly where the British would attack.

Sutphin had heard rumors about the great numbers of soldiers the British were sending to attack New York and he wondered if he and the other militiamen could hold them off. Many of the colonial soldiers had never been in battle before. This was to be Sam Sutphin's first battle too. He might be wounded, or even killed! During the last days spent preparing for the attack, he made a decision. "My master has promised to free me if I fight in his place," he thought. "If I must fight to become a free man, then I will fight!"

Finally, on August 22, 1776, the British crossed Gravesend Bay and landed on Long Island at a spot near Coney Island. Five days later, on August 27, General Howe attacked and the battle began (See Figure 3). This battle was fought in what is now known as Brooklyn. Because, in 1776, Long Island had not yet been divided into the boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens and the counties of Nassau and Suffolk, the battle is known as the *Battle of Long Island.*

As Sutphin had feared, British troops outnumbered the colonists three to one and were very well-trained. Sutphin and the others struggled bravely to overcome the overwhelming odds, but it was hopeless! The colonists were no match for the polished British troops.

The colonial soldiers fled in panic as the redcoats swarmed over the battlefield. Sutphin's company scattered in all directions. Wandering around in the thick cannon-smoke, Sutphin was able to find only two men from his company. Together, they searched for a way to escape from Long Island (Brooklyn).

The three men heard someone shout, "Some of our ships have come to help us escape! Make your way to the ships! Hurry!" But the British fire was heavy and Sam Sutphin and his friends could not see through the smoke. The voices of the other men were fading further and further into the distance! What would they do? They would be left behind, and captured or killed!

The evacuation of American troops from Long Island (Brooklyn) was handled by General John Glover from Marblehead, Massachusetts. There were nearly 150 Black soldiers in the ranks of General Glover's seafarers. These land and sea fighters evacuated the patriots from Brooklyn (See Figure 4). Some of the stragglers managed to reach Nutten Island (now Governor's Island), and Glover's seafarers returned later that evening to rescue them and to salvage as much of the artillery and provisions as they were able to load aboard.

*Julius Cezar* and *Timothy Prince* were among the troops who reached Manhattan safely. Several days passed while they rested from the battle. They talked softly about how lucky they were to be alive and safe in Manhattan. They were sad about the men who had not been as lucky as they had been. *London Citizen*, who fought with the Rhode Island regiment, was on the list of soldiers who were killed, missing in action, or taken prisoner.

As they talked, they heard someone shout, "There's a boat! Four men aboard!" "Spies! They might be British spies!" As the boat came closer, the men on shore strained for a sign, a signal. One of the men in the boat stood, leaned forward slightly and cupped his hands around his mouth.

"It's me!", he shouted. "Private Sam Sutphin of Colonel Taylor's New Jersey Militia!" The men on shore breathed a sigh of relief.

Samuel Sutphin had hidden out with his friends for several days after Glover's seafarers evacuated the other troops. During that time, they happened to run across another Black man who lived near where the battle had been fought. Sutphin told the man what had happened. The man told him that he had heard the cannon and seen the smoke. "You are not safe here. I have a boat," he said. "I will take you across the river." Three days after the battle, Sutphin and the others arrived safely on Manhattan.

Meanwhile, General Washington began prepa-

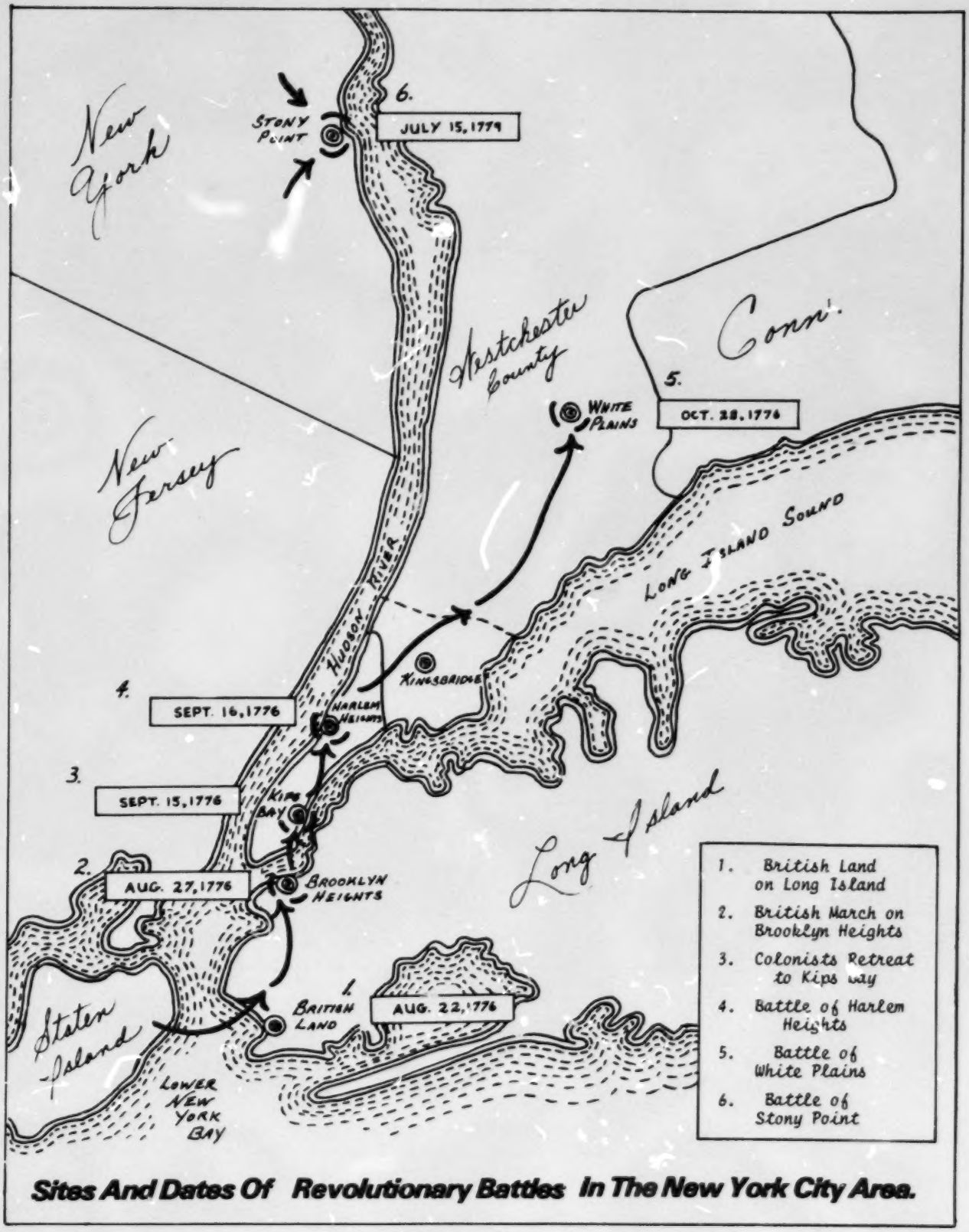


Figure 2 Map of Area

ration, for the British attack on Manhattan. The Morris House at 160th Street and Edgecombe Avenue served as headquarters for the colonial troops. One division was stationed on the southern tip of Manhattan. Parts of the second division were stationed along the East River from 15th Street to Harlem. A third division was ordered to protect Kingsbridge and the Westchester shore.

For several weeks, the Americans waited and watched for signs of the British invasion of Manhattan. While he waited, General Washington saw his men grow weaker and weaker. Many were sick and wounded. Some had deserted. "My men have fought very hard," he thought, "but we are outnumbered and cannot fight again so soon." So, General Washington sent the order to each division to evacuate the city. On September 14, 1776, the colonial troops began the march to Harlem Heights, an area west of what is now Eighth Avenue north of 125th Street.

On September 15, while Washington's three divisions were on the march to Harlem Heights, the British landed at Kip's Bay cove where 34th Street is now located. One American regiment was still in Manhattan but managed to escape without meeting the British.

By sunset, the colonial troops were safely camped on Harlem Heights. British General Howe pitched camp near what is now Ninth Avenue between 91st and 92nd Streets—only a mile and a half from the Americans!

General Washington planned an escape route which would lead through Fort Washington and Kingsbridge, through upper New York State and finally to New England. New England was still controlled by the Americans. General Washington knew that the British would try to cut off their escape. He stationed his men at Throg's Neck, where Tremont Avenue now touches the East River.

*Timothy Prince*, one of the Black soldiers who escaped death at the Battle of Long Island, was with the troops camped at Harlem Heights. Like his fellow soldiers, Prince was exhausted by the Battle of Long Island and the long march to Harlem Heights. Other troops had joined Washington's retreat, and many of these were black.

*Primus Hall*, one of the Black soldiers called up as reinforcements, came to Harlem Heights from Boston, Massachusetts. *James Keeter* came from Marshpee, Massachusetts. And *Enoch Freeman* came from Mansfield, Connecticut. All were camped out with the colonists on Harlem Heights in the still, early morning of September 16, 1776. All of a sudden, shots rang out! The sleeping Hall, Keeter, and Freeman sprung to their feet and loaded their muskets! Before long, the whole area between 111th Street and 120th Street was crowded with the clashing armies. The *Battle of Harlem Heights* was underway!

The patriots fought bravely, and, for the first time since they met the British at the Battle of Long Island, they saw the backs of the redcoats. The British were in retreat!

The colonists' spirits were lifted by their victory, but General Washington knew that they were still outnumbered and not nearly as well-trained as the British. He was not certain that they could defeat the British a second time.

The Americans wanted to hold onto some part of New York if they possibly could. But by October 12, 1776, the British had moved into a position which forced General Washington to make a very difficult decision—the Continental Army regiments must leave New York Island.

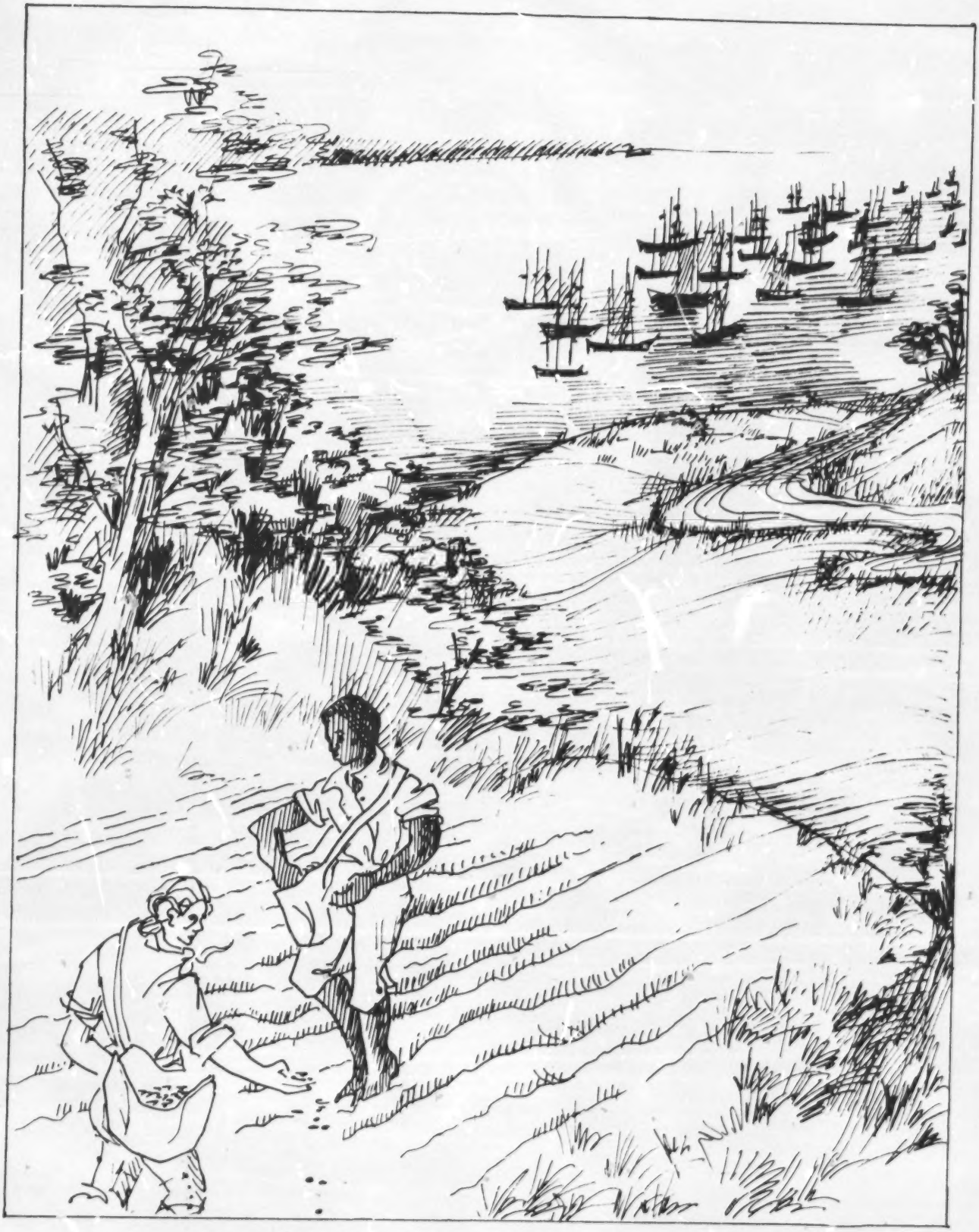

Figure 3 British Attack Long Island (Brooklyn)

Figure 4 Glover's Seafarers Evacuat · Troops From Long Island (Brooklyn)

# The Fight for White Plains

On October 16th and 18th, the Americans once again were forced into retreat. They marched over Kingsbridge into Westchester County toward White Plains, leaving a few soldiers here and there to slow the advancing British.

On the march, the colonists were joined by still more reinforcements. *Primus Hall* and *Enoch Freeman* were now battle-tested veterans. Among the fresh troops was the famous *Salem Poor*, Black veteran of the Battle of Bunker Hill and hero of the Battle of Charleston. At Bunker Hill, militiaman Poor had fought side-by-side with *Prince Hall*, the founder of the first Negro Masonic Lodge. Now he was about to face the British again with Prince Hall's son, *Primus*.

Other Black soldiers called up as reinforcements were *Henry Cato* from New Jersey; *York Champlain, Samuel Dunbar,* and *Artillo Freeman* from Massachusetts; *Caesar Shelton* from Connecticut; and *Philip Rodman* from Rhode Island. Twenty-year-old *Henry Cato* had been stationed on Staten Island just before the British landed at Long Island to begin the campaign to drive the Americans from New York, but he had not yet seen action. When the war began, *Caesar Shelton* was a slave in Connecticut. He enlisted as a substitute for his master's son, and was given his freedom in exchange for his service.

With the others, these Black men made their way along the route to White Plains.

On October 28, the British caught up with the retreating American troops at Chatterton Hill. The battle that followed was known as the *Battle of White Plains*. Although it was another defeat for the American army, the soldiers—Black and white—fought well and bravely (See Figure 5). The British did not pursue Washington and his troops after this battle, and the disheartened Continental soldiers fled to North Castle during the night of October 31, 1776.

During the summer and early autumn of 1776, the British army took control of Staten Island, Long Island, New York City and part of Westchester County. The American army had met with a series of defeats and retreats, sacrifices, and discouragement.

After the Battle of White Plains, *Artillo Freeman* and *Enoch Freeman* laid down their muskets. They had served their country well and received honorable discharges. Artillo Freeman was discharged at West Point and went home to Massachusetts where he lived to the ripe old age of 110. Enoch Freeman had already reenlisted once when Washington sent out a call for reinforcements at Harlem Heights. He stayed on to fight at White Plains. In December, his second enlistment expired and he went home to Connecticut.

*Caesar Shelton's* enlistment also expired shortly after the Battle of White Plains, but he reenlisted the following May and fought at the Battles of Germantown, Saratoga, Red Bank, Monmouth, and Horse Neck. At Horse Neck, he was wounded in the back and leg.

*Henry Cato, Philip Rodman,* and *Primus Hall* continued with Washington's three core regiments on the march across the Hudson River, past Fort Lee and south through New Jersey into Pennsylvania. They fought with Washington at the battles of Trenton and Princeton. *Julius Cezar's* company had rejoined Washington's command at Trenton.

At the Battle of Princeton, *Primus Hall* had become a hero by capturing a number of British soldiers single-handedly after chasing them over a half mile!

In spite of such bravery, the next two years did not go well for the Americans as they were defeated in battle after battle in places like Brandywine, Schuykill, and Germantown in Pennsylvania. When the British captured Philadelphia, forcing the Continental Congress to flee to Lancaster, the outlook was very dim for the Americans. General Washington took up winter quarters at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, and the Continental Army was to face its darkest days. *Salem Poor* and *Timothy Prince* were among the Black soldiers who survived the long, hard winter of 1778.

The armies were tired, hungry, and disappointed. The future looked bleak and morale was low. Washington longed for a victory to rally his men. Many men wanted to go home. Some waited for their enlistments to expire, packed their gear and left. Others deserted. Most of the men, however, chose to stay with Washington through the harsh winter.

While Washington and his men waited and trained at Valley Forge, news came from the Continental Congress. France had joined the Americans in the fight for independence! This was the news Washington had hoped for! As history shows, the

entrance of the French forces into the war helped to turn the tide of the war in favor of the Continental Army.

The British evacuated Philadelphia on June 18, 1778 and headed across New Jersey to New York City. When Washington and his generals heard of the British retreat, they broke camp and gave chase. The Americans caught up with the British first at Monmouth Court House in New Jersey in June, 1778 and soundly defeated them.

Finally, in July 1779, General Washington decided to launch a surprise attack against the British at Stony Point, a fort on the Hudson River just below West Point.

**Figure 5** Illustration of Ebony Patriots in Action

*DECLARATION:* in order to secure the benefit of the Act of Congress, passed June 7, 1832.

## COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

COUNTY OF WORCESTER, ss.

ON this Twentieth day of August in the year of our Lord, eighteen hundred and thirty three personally appeared in Open Court, before Nathaniel Paine, Judge of Probate for the County aforesaid now sitting Primus Tyng a person of color a resident of Petersham in the County of Worcester and Commonwealth of Massachusetts, aged seventy two years, who being first duly sworn according to law, doth on his oath make the following declaration, in order to obtain the benefit of the act of Congress, passed June 7th, 1832.

THAT he enlisted the service of the United States under the following named officers and served as stated. To wit for May or June 1776 he enlisted as a private for the term of three months in a company of infantry commanded by Capt Elliot in Col Samuel Tarleton's regiment. Leighton and Frazier and Ensign Symonds belonged to the same company. His enlistment was at Salem, near Boston where he then resided. That he marched through Princeton and Warwick in this State to Stillwater in New York where he remained sometime, when the term of his enlistment expired. That immediately afterward he again enlisted for the term of one year in the same Company and regiment and commanded by the same officers, and was marched from thence to Stoney Point on the North River; was present in the engagement when Stoney Point was retaken. David Drumm, who then belonged to Framingham and of whom belonged to Capt. Rice's Company was the first one who entered the fort of whom he well. Brig. Gen. Glover was present and Gen Patterson was the commanding officers. That during this period he was occasionally on Scouting parties after cow boys – That the term of service expired when he was at Elizabethtown in New Jersey – and that he immediately enlisted during the war in the same Company and regiment commanded by the same officers, and was attached to Gen Patterson's Brigade: that he was in New Jersey during a part of the year 1777 and was in the battle of Monmouth where Gen Washington commanded in person; that toward the fall of the same year while he was marching up the North river to join the army of Gen Gates in heart of the battle at Bennington. that he was in the battle at Saratoga when Gen Burgoine surrendered: that previous to the surrender of Burgoine Capt Elliot was detached with volunteers including part of the company to reinforce Gen St. Clair, and was killed: and that after that and Capt Frazier, of whom the name was Samuel, commanded the company to the close of the war – that after the surrender of Burgoine he was marched back to Stoney Point, and that he was stationed there and in the vicinity to the close of the war: he was there at the time of the surrender of Lord Cornwallis: that he was discharged at that place at the close of the war, that he then deposited his gun in the Store House and returned home to Salem, and that he kept his discharge many years, but has lost it – And that he faithfully performed his duty as a good soldier from the time of his first enlistment in 1776 to the time when he was regularly discharged at Stoney Point as aforesaid at the close of the war –

He further testifies and declares that after due enquiry he knows of no one who knows of his services in the army; and of course he is unable to procure any evidence to that point – but refers to such evidence as may be found in the war office – nor is he able to state the precise dates and times of his several enlistments.

He further testifies and declares that he was born in Salem in the County of Essex near Boston about seventy two years ago, he cannot recollect the precise time – nor does he know whether his age is or is not there recorded – his father's name was Jack and his mothers name was Phillis Brown ingersfield and was a native of Guinea in Africa

He testifies and says that he has been a preparing man for the main part of the time since the close of the war till five or six years ago: since which time he resided in Natick two or three years and about two years in Dudley: and from thence he came to Petersham and has resided here about six months

He hereby relinquishes every claim whatever to a pension or annuity except the present, and declares that his name is not on the pension roll of the agency of any state.

Sworn to and subscribed the day and year aforesaid.

Before Nath'l Paine Judge of Probate for the County of Worcester

Primus Tyng mark

Witness James Mead

Figure 6 Illustration of Black Soldier's Pension Application

## The Assault On Stony Point

GENERAL "Mad" Anthony Wayne was chosen to lead this assault with 1500 choice volunteers. It was not easy to find volunteers, but when they were finally assembled, General Wayne saw many black faces among his troops—many of whom had been in battle several times already and knew the dangers involved.

*Peter Bonet*, a Black man, volunteered with Colonel Return Meigs' 3rd Connecticut Regiment. Private *Bristol Bud* had seen action at Saratoga, White Marsh, and Monmouth before he came to Stony Point. *Julius Cezar* had fought at Long Island, Trenton, and Brandywine. *Primus Tyng*, whose mother was a native of Guinea, had been a member of many scouting parties against British renegades known as "cowboys" and had fought at Saratoga and Monmouth (See Figure 6).

Also among the select squad who volunteered for the daring attack on Stony Point was the hero of the Battle of Bunker Hill, *Peter Salem*. After Bunker Hill, Salem had remained in the Continental Army for seven years and saw action at the Battle of Saratoga. He was to fight his last battle at Stony Point.

The fort sat on top of a high cliff overlooking the Hudson River and was surrounded by heavy brush and trees. The British patrolled the area day and night.

General Wayne had kept watch for three long months before making a move. He planned to lead a "suicide squad" into the fort to open the way for the whole regiment. But how would the squad get inside the fort?

On a nearby farm lived a slave named *Pompey Lamb*. Lamb, whose master favored the American cause, was permitted to deliver fresh fruit to British soldiers inside the fort. In this way Lamb was able to gain valuable information about the works within the compound. Lamb's master passed the information along to General Anthony Wayne. With the explanation that he was needed during the day to help with the corn-hoeing, Lamb persuaded the British to allow him to deliver at night. The British officers gave Lamb the password and for some time, he passed freely between the fort and his master's farm.

During the night of July 15, 1779, General Wayne disguised himself and two officers as farmers. They went with Pompey Lamb to the fort, and when Lamb gave the password "The Fort's Our Own!", the British guards opened the gates and the four men entered. Instead of fruit the British guards saw that the "farmers" held knives! But it was too late to cry for help! General Wayne and his officers and Pompey Lamb subdued the guards and signaled to the waiting volunteers to charge! The fort was taken with the loss of only three colonial soldiers.

Thus ended the last battle in New York State. For his service to the Americans, Pompey Lamb was given a riding horse.

## The Ebony Patriots After The War

MANY PROMISES were made to the EBONY PATRIOTS, slave and free, and many promises were broken. After *Bristol Budd* (Battle of Stony Point) was discharged, he lost his discharge papers. As a result, he had a great deal of difficulty in receiving his pension. When he applied for the pension, he found that the War Department had listed him as a deserter! Budd tried again and again to locate his former officers and friends from the army to prove that he had served honorably and had not deserted. The years passed and Budd had little success. His officers and friends were scattered all over the new states.

At last, Bristol Budd heard that his former company captain lived in New Canaan, Connecticut! By this time, Budd was poor, aged, and totally blind. "How will I get to New Canaan?", he wondered. "I have no money. I am old and blind." The situation looked hopeless. His son came to him. "We will walk to New Canaan, father, and I will lead you." Bristol Budd and his son set out for New Canaan. They walked for days and days. When they finally reached the captain's house, they had walked over 400 miles!

The captain remembered Budd and the service he had performed for the new nation. Bristol Budd was finally awarded his pension in December, 1821.

After the war, *Henry Cato* (Battle of White Plains) enlisted in the New Jersey Battalion under the command of Zebulon Pike (after whom Colorado's Pikes Peak was named). Later, Cato served with General "Mad" Anthony Wayne of Stony Point fame during the Indian campaigns.

Following several years of fighting, Cato retired to Rockbridge, Virginia and applied for his pension. Because Cato was not attached to a regular regiment for his full term of service, he was able to claim pension benefits for only the first four years of duty.

*Caesar Shelton* (Battle of White Plains) reenlisted after the Battle of White Plains to fight at Germantown, Saratoga, Red Bank, and Monmouth. He was wounded in the back and leg at Horse Neck. Shelton had some difficulty in proving he was eligible to receive pension monies but would not give up. He was finally awarded his [illegible] in February, 1840 (See Figure 7). At this [illegible] Caesar Shelton was nearly 90 years old [illegible] die.

*Samuel Sutphin* (Battle of Long Island) had joined the army as a substitute for his master. He had been promised his freedom at the end of his service. During his tour of duty, Sutphin served well. After the Battle of Long Island, he joined Colonel Seely in chasing the Indian allies of the British as far as Buffalo, New York. He was later wounded in a skirmish with a party of Hessians and was taken to West Point to recover.

When he was discharged, Sutphin returned to New Jersey to collect his manumission, or freedom, papers from his master. Instead, his master quickly sold him!

Sutphin was sold four times during the next twenty years! Finally, an elderly Samuel Sutphin saved enough money to buy his freedom.

Thousands of Black soldiers like those who fought in New York State did their best to make the ideals set down in the preamble to the Declaration of Independence a reality:

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness—

Although the dreams of these Black men were deferred, they had helped to make a part of the American dream come true.

TRANSCRIPT OF PENSION APPLICATION

October 13, 1931

Rev. A 1813 Wars Section
RA-J/KEL

The data furnished herewith are obtained from the papers on file in the Revolutionary War claim for pension of Caesar Shelton. S.19764, based upon his military services in that war.

Caesar Shelton (the name also appears as Cezar Shulton and as Caeser or Ceser Negro), a colored man, was born at sea while his mother was being brought from Africa.

At the beginning of the Revolutionary War, he was a slave of John Shelton, of Stratford, or Bridgeport, Connecticut, and enlisted on condition that he be given his freedom for his services. His first service was as a substitute for his master's son, but no details are given. It was stated that he was in the battle of White Plains.

He enlisted and served from May 14, 1777, until May 17, 1780, as a private in Colonel John Durkee's Connecticut Regiment, and was in the battle of Germantown, at the taking of Burgoyne, at the battles of Red Bank and Monmouth, and in several skirmishes at Horse Neck, in one of which he was wounded in the back by a sword thrust and on the shin by a ball.

After the Revolution, he resided in Bridgewater, Connecticut, then moved to Sandisfield, Massachusetts. He also resided in Blandford and Northampton, and other towns in that vicinity.

He was allowed pension on his application executed February 6, 1840, at which time he was nearly ninety years of age and resided in Sandisfield, Berkshire County, Massachusetts.

His wife was living in 1847, but her name and the date of their marriage are not given and there is no reference to children.

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This history to be furnished if ever called for. It was written just to have a record of negroes.

Did not use soldier's statement that he was in Potter's Co. Meigs' Regt. because he later said he was not in Meigs' Regt, but had made his affidavit that way because he was ignorant and had been told to do so by one John Heath, who wrote the affidavit in a great hurry and did not read it to him after written. So used state report. Also did not use statement in a mss of Conn. State Historical Society because I could not verify the officers as having served together, this service was said to be "for the war", but the pension of rejected this claim and stated that "such proof as this is of little value."

Figure 7 Transcript of Black Soldier's Pension Application

## Black Soldiers Continue The Fight For Freedom

THE Black men who fought in the Revolutionary War battles in New York State—the EBONY PATRIOTS—were neither the first nor the last Black Americans to serve their country in battle. Black Americans have served in every major conflict in the country's history, from the French and Indian War to the Vietnam War. They fought for many reasons, but above all they fought for freedom and equality. If they were slaves, they offered their services to a government which would grant them freedom. If they were free men, they fought for a government which would guarantee them equal treatment under the law.

While many Black veterans of the Revolutionary War were still fighting for their pension benefits, many other Black men were answering the call for volunteers at the outbreak of the War of 1812. They fought hard and well and won the admiration of Andrew Jackson, only to have the nation turn its back once again. A General Order was issued in 1820 which stated that: "No Negro or Mulatto will be received as a recruit of the Army."

Nearly a century after the battles of Long Island, Harlem Heights, and Stony Point were fought in New York, Black soldiers were to fight in another war for freedom, the Civil War. They would fight in places called Fort Pillow, Milliken's Bend, and Petersburg in Virginia. This time, they would give their lives so that "all persons held as slaves . . . shall be then, thence-forward, and forever free . . ."

EBONY PATRIOTS were the famous "Buffalo Soldiers" of the Indian Wars on the American frontier. They were among the "Rough Riders" who charged up San Juan Hill with Theodore Roosevelt in the Spanish-American War. They were the heroes of the "Fighting 369th" who earned the highest French military honor, the Croix de Guerre, in World War I.

More than three million Black patriots, men and women, served in World War II—most of them in segregated units. The all-Black 332nd Fighter Group, commanded by Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., flew nearly 1,600 combat missions and over 15,000 sorties.

The first victory for the United Nations forces in the Korean War was won by the all-Black 24th Infantry. Many Black men risked, and sometimes lost, their lives in the fields, jungles and skies of Vietnam.

Black men have fought and died in every war in this nations's 200-year history to make the promises of the Declaration of Independence and the Emancipation Proclamation a reality. To this very day, EBONY PATRIOTS continue to serve with honor in the struggle for *freedom, justice* and *equality at home and abroad!*

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